

"WOULD WE HAVE BELIEVED THEM?"

INTRODUCTION

1. I have often wondered...

a. How many of us living today, had we been living in the first century...

b. Would have been receptive to the preaching of those like:

1) John the Baptist?

2) Peter?

3) Paul?

2. Most of us would probably say, "**Of course, for we receive them now!**"

a. But maybe that is because what they taught has become socially acceptable...

b. And more often than not, their teaching is presented to us in a non-offensive manner

3. But how was the truth originally presented? By what manner of men? If we had been there, would we have believed them?

4. I hope in this lesson to challenge our thinking along these lines...

[Imagine, then, would we have believed men like...]

I. THE HARSH HERMIT?

A. JOHN THE BAPTIST, WHO...

1. Did his preaching in the wilderness, forcing people to come out to hear him? - [Mt 3:1-2](#)
2. Dressed himself in camel's hair and a leather girdle, eating a diet of locusts and wild honey? - [Mt 3:4](#)
3. Called religious people coming to be baptized a "brood of vipers"? - [Mt 3:5-7](#)

B. I SERIOUSLY DOUBT WE WOULD...

1. IF we balk at having to travel some distance to study God's Word!
 - a. As is sometimes the case today (e.g., going twice on Sundays, etc.)
 - b. But consider what Jesus taught in [Mt 12:42](#)
2. IF we tend to judge people by the clothes they wear!
 - a. It is easy to be affected by the "Dress For Success" philosophy
 - b. But we need to remember God's perspective - [1 Sa 16:7](#); [Jm 2:1-4](#)
3. IF we get upset or offended when a preacher points out our faults!
 - a. Some would have preachers never preach "negative" sermons
 - b. But even Jesus demonstrated that sometimes the occasion calls for strong measures - [Mt 23:13-15](#)

[Or how about the...]

II. THE HILLBILLY HYPOCRITE?

A. THE APOSTLE PETER, A MAN...

1. Whose "country ways" demonstrated his lack of formal religious training? - [Ac 4:13](#)
2. Who denied Jesus three times? - [Mt 26:69-75](#)
3. Whose hypocrisy on one occasion split a church? - [Ga 2:11-13](#)

B. IT IS UNLIKELY...

1. IF we expect a man to be formerly educated before we would want him as a preacher!
 - a. In some churches, a preacher is required to have a degree to be considered acceptable
 - b. But the wrong kind of learning can be a dangerous thing - cf. [1Co 1:18-29](#)
2. IF we aren't willing to give others another chance who fail us, especially more than once!
 - a. If Peter had been treated like we sometimes treat fallen preachers today, would he have remained an apostle?
 - b. Fortunately, the early church took to heart what Jesus taught Peter about forgiveness - [Mt 18:21-22](#); [Lk 17:3-4](#)

[And then, what about...]

III. THE NOTORIOUS NERD?

A. THE APOSTLE PAUL, WHO...

1. Had been a blasphemer, persecutor of the church? -

1Ti 1:13

2. Was not a fluent speaker? - **1Co 2:3-4**

3. Had a physical appearance described as "weak"? -

2Co 10:10

B. I DOUBT WE WOULD HAVE KINDLY RECEIVED PAUL...

1. IF we hold a person's pre-Christian life against them!

a. Such people must not believe in the power of the gospel to transform lives

b. But consider what it did for the people of Corinth -

1Co 6:9-11

2. IF we don't care to hear preachers whose sermon presentation lacks "polish"!

a. Many people will not go to hear preachers who may be young, inexperienced, or who are not eloquent

b. Yet "smooth words and flattering speech" can oftentimes be used to deceive - **Ro 16:17-18**

3. IF we tend to judge people by their physical appearance (size, weight, etc.)!

a. So people first judged Abraham Lincoln

b. Again, we need to remember God's perspective on things - **1 Sa 16:7**

CONCLUSION

1. What I am suggesting is that how we receive people today is a strong indication as to whether we would have received such as John, Peter, Paul and even Jesus!

- cf. [Mt 13:54-58](#)

2. While we would like to think we would have been quick to listen and believe their message, perhaps we might have acted differently!

3. I hope that we appreciate the importance of looking beyond the messenger and how his message might be presented, to the message itself

4. But there is another way to determine if we would have believed them back then: **HAVE WE OBEYED THEM TODAY?**

a. It may be speculation on our part to say we would have believed these men back in the first century...

b. But one thing is sure...if we are unwilling to obey them today, we certainly would not have done it then!

How about you...?